

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION STAFF
RESPONSE TO DATA REQUEST

DATE PREPARED: December 7, 2007
DOCKET: TR-070696
REQUESTER: BNSF

WITNESS: Tom Zeinz
RESPONDER: Jonathan Thompson
TELEPHONE: (360) 664-1225

BNSF DATA REQUEST NO. 28:

How many times has Thomas Zeinz testified in crossing improvement and closure/consolidation cases before similar commissions in other states? How many of those times did Mr. Zeinz recommend closing a crossing? How many of those times involved a petition to close a crossing with both mainline and siding tracks?

RESPONSE:

Mr. Zeinz has testified in approximately 30 crossing closure/consolidation cases before similar commissions in other states. In virtually all of these cases, Mr. Zeinz favored closing one or more crossings. Approximately eight to 10 of these cases involved multiple tracks (main track and siding, or multiple main tracks).

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BNSF DATA REQUEST NO. 29:

Is it Mr. Zeinz's opinion that it is practical to install a raised median barrier at a crossing even if wide trucks frequently drive (at least partly) across the center line due to the width of the roadway?

RESPONSE:

No, it is not. Raised center medians or delineators are but one strategy to discourage motorists from circumventing lowered crossing gates. At locations where "gate running" is or could be an issue and the roadway was sufficiently narrow that wider vehicles needed to drive (at least partly) astraddle the roadway centerline, the width of the respective roadway could be adjusted accordingly or other strategies pursued (such as installing four-quadrant gates).

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BNSF DATA REQUEST NO. 36:

Please indicate whether the “lights” referenced on page 9, line 18 of Mr. Zeinz’s testimony (“they may not realize that the lights and gates are really being activated by a second train on the other track . . . and mistakenly believe it’s safe to drive around the lowered gates”) include the traffic stop lights. If so, provide the basis to support Mr. Zeinz’s testimony that drivers are equally likely to ignore traffic stop lights as warning gates. Please explain.

RESPONSE:

As stated in Staff’s response to BNSF Data Request No. 35, the traffic lights may be of benefit toward mitigating confusion insofar as movements across the tracks. However, to some degree, the same holds true for traffic stop lights as warning gates. Mr. Zeinz is of the considered opinion, and believes the preponderance of other traffic engineers would concur, that there is also a higher likelihood of red traffic signal violations when motorists perceive they are being unduly delayed or precluded from making certain movements for no immediately apparent reason.

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BNSF DATA REQUEST NO. 37:

Does Mr. Zeinz claim that citizens have driven around lowered gates at the Blackburn crossing? Please provide all relevant documents regarding this information, including but not limited to citizen complaints, accident reports, and photographs.

RESPONSE:

No, Mr. Zeinz has not made any such claim regarding this particular crossing. He is merely stating that it is his experience such behavior can and often does occur at other crossings where trains routinely stop in close proximity to crossings.